



Case Study Responses - Jess

In the background section of the application, what red flag responses did you find?

- Working breed with no information on social background for first 1.5 years of life
- Previous fight with friend or neighbor dog

In the household and behavior section of the application, what red flag responses did you find?

Primary concerns can be summarized as limited dog social interactions for adult dog aged 3, energy level and deteriorating behaviors at home. Jess seems to have a lack of respect for mom as a leader. Would want to introduce to a smaller dog to evaluate prey drive during evaluation. Specific responses that raised these flags include:

- Chases cats; one household cat hides from her – prey drive concern
- Territorial behavior at home
- Unpredictable behavior interacting with other dogs
- Obedience not used at home
- Uses prong/pinch collar to walk Jess
- Jumps on mom & ignores her cues
- Mom bitten breaking up fight with another dog
- High energy
- Chases squirrels/cats on walks (prey drive)
- Growled at mom taking food away
- Concern with how many good dog social experiences she has had & deteriorating social behavior

How were Jess's communication skills?

Jess did not perform the ritualized greeting behaviors expected by tester dogs. She gave clear warning signals when uncomfortable.

How would you describe Jess's stress level in an unfamiliar environment?

Moderate level of stress within range frequently seen in applicant dogs. Stress escalated when her mom left the room.

How did Jess respond when she was uncomfortable?

Stiffen and give warning growls and snaps. Move close to her mom. When mom was out of the room her stress signals escalated and had she lower tolerance for close dog interactions.

What stress signals did you observe? Which dog(s)?

Lip licking, shake-off, half-moon eye – multiple tester dogs
Shake-off, panting, scratching, whining – Jess

Did you see displacement behaviors? Which dog(s)?

Floor sniffing – Dallas and Brownie

What did the warning signals and aggressive displays indicate?

Jess did not like dogs close to her or her mom. She is not comfortable meeting new dogs.

What did the tester dogs say?

Sheppy – My job is done and I will respect your signals to not interact.

Dallas – Your signals make me uncomfortable so I'll just sniff around the room and hopefully this will end soon and I can go back to my playgroup.

Buddy – You gave a play signal, but sense you don't really want to play so I'll just go meet the peoples on the other side of room.

Brownie – I will respect your warning and not interact.

What value was there to having the owner present during the evaluation?

Confirmed protective behavior flag in application when Jess gave Sheppy a warning when interacting with her mom. Concern is whether this would translate to other people or objects in the playgroup environment. This behavior probably would not have been displayed if owner was not present. Jess' stress level escalated when mom was out of the room so don't know if she would have greeted or interacted with tester dogs individually if mom was not present.

What was client's motivation of having Jess evaluated for off-leash dog play?

Provide more social experiences and reduce her "bad behaviors".

Would Jess enjoy or tolerate off-leash dog play? Why?

Tolerate; she did not relax and showed limited interest in interacting with the other dogs.

If pass, what would you communicate to the owner? Which playgroup would you put Jess into and why?

N/A as would not pass Jess to attend playgroups at this time.

If fail, what would you communicate to the owner? What alternatives would you recommend?

Jess' behavior tells us that she has little interest in interacting with other dogs at this time. The environment of off-leash play would not be enjoyable at this time due to being forced into a group interaction too intense could push her to use higher level of aggressive displays.

We could try private socialization sessions where Jess would be introduced slowly to other dogs at a pace comfortable for her. We would try to find matches like Buddy to whom she showed some interest, but that would respect her boundaries and warnings. Would also recommend additional obedience training and use of cues at home, especially by mom. Discuss importance of changing dynamics of their relationship. Private training at home might be the best starting point to address owner behavior concerns.

What did the staff that observed the evaluation learn?

Jess's evaluation emphasized importance of observing body language and behavior of tester dogs. In this evaluation tester dogs displayed yellow body language, multiple stress (calming signals) and displacement behaviors. Keep decision focused on fit of environment even if there is not obvious behavior that explains why dogs do not interact.

What did you find most interesting about this dog evaluation? What did you learn?

Susan found the reaction of the tester dogs very interesting; especially the numerous displacement behaviors they displayed and the lack of interaction. There were not obvious behaviors from Jess that seemed to cause this consistent reaction from multiple tester dogs.

Robin found the reaction of Jess to each dog interesting. She ranged from complete avoidance to some play behaviors, but always ended up acting somewhat nervous and not completely comfortable in the environment. I also thought her resource guarding of the owner very interesting to see consistently.